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ACCEPTANCE OF GAVEL ON BEHALF OF THE COLUMBIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

BY HON. JOB BARNARD, VICE-PRESIDENT.

Mr. President: The Columbia Historical Society, through its board of managers, has instructed me to accept this beautiful gift so kindly presented by you, and I do so, with many thanks to you for your thoughtfulness in procuring and presenting the same.

It seems proper for a historical society to possess such a gavel, not alone for its use in preserving order, but because it suggests the historical character whose unmarked grave it so long guarded and identified. Major L'Enfant ought to be remembered with gratitude by all true Americans, for the splendid services performed by him during the Revolutionary War. His life began at an interesting period in our history, in 1755, the year that General Braddock marched to Fort Duquesne, and General Washington's military experience prepared him to take command of the continental armies. He was educated and trained in France, as a soldier and an engineer, and came to our country with General Lafayette in 1777, to fight and work for our cause, to be wounded at the siege of Savannah, and to become Washington's chief of engineers, and the designer of many strong fortifications. This noble service should cause his memory to be cherished by any historical society, if he had never planned the federal city; but to our local society, having planned this capital, is enough to make his memory dear to us, although he had done nothing more.

In this connection, I wish to say that it was his pride

and zeal for the preservation of this plan, his loyalty to his ideal of the city of Washington, that caused his dismissal, for he was asked by the commissioners to allow his plan to be engraved and published in aid of a public sale of lots. This he refused, asserting as his reason, that speculators would purchase the best locations in the "vistas and architectural squares" and "permanently disfigure the city" by "huddles of shanties." His opposition to this public sale, and his refusal to contribute to aid it, caused his dismissal by President Washington.

I quote a paragraph from page 102 of the centennial history of the city of Washington, published in 1892, in which the writer says, referring to Major L'Enfant:

"At this late date, and in the presence of the fruition of his great plan, it is not difficult to draw a veil over the weaknesses and foibles of this brilliant and enthusiastic Frenchman. He had manifested his gallantry on the battlefields of the Revolution. He showed to the world how great was his faith in the stability of our institutions and the future progress of his adopted country in the plan he devised for its future Capital, and his loyalty never flagged under the pressure of what must have seemed to him ingratitude and neglect. Somewhere in our beautiful city there will some day arise a proper monument to the man who deserves so much at the hand of every true American."

May we not say, with truth, that during the seventeen years since this prophecy was made, that "proper monument" has already appeared in the rapid development of this city, on the lines of his magnificent plan; and when the same is finally completed, no man can have a more appropriate or distinguished monument than this city of Washington will be for the man in whose brain it first took shape.